

April 27, 1959

Hon. Kenneth A. Roberts  
House Office Building  
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Representative Roberts:

This week's Reporter Magazine carries a splendid article by Daniel Moynihan "Epidemic on the Highways". I was delighted to read of the work your subcommittee has been doing on the problem of traffic safety. It seems ridiculous that this immense and tragic disease should have so little attention from a fundamental standpoint. I would be very interested to be on the mailing list of your subcommittee for its findings as they are published.

Mr. Moynihan's article indicated that, to put it mildly, you have had some difficulty in obtaining industry cooperation. This is perhaps more understandable in view of its competitive operations but this can hardly be tolerated as a hindrance to constructive action. It seems to me however, that your subcommittee should have tremendous leverage on the industry if its own investigations on the relative safety factors of different vehicles were published. Indeed one wonders whether the American public is not entitled, as a matter of right, to the conclusions from the study financed by the Armed Forces Epidemiological Board conducted by Dunlop Associates. I might mention that I had tried some few years ago to look for similar statistics from the records of the Motor Vehicle Department of the State of Wisconsin but was not surprised to find that they were not available in a useable form to discern any pattern of injury traceable to specific makes of vehicles. In any case, gross statistics might be misleading since a different sample of the population is likely to be driving a Jaguar as compared to a Ford but this should not be an excuse for concealing from critical investigators.

Permit me, at any rate, to offer my wholehearted support for your program of federal regulation of automotive safety standards. Of course this is a responsibility which the states should share but even as Commissioner Larson (Wisconsin) has written to me, "I am sure you will agree that legislation of this type to be most effective and equitable to the people of all states must be enacted at the federal level."

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg,  
Executive Head  
Department of Genetics

Robert A. Roberts